

# Final Frontier

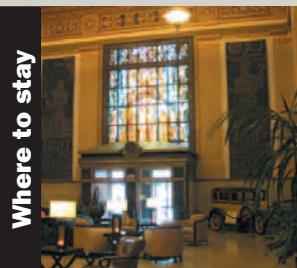
**YOUR MISSION, SHOULD YOU CHOOSE TO ACCEPT IT** Brave the historic Alamo, where your kids can channel Davy Crockett.



## PLAN IT

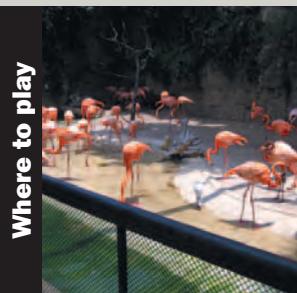
More to do

Where to stay



**Drury Plaza Hotel** (105 S St. Mary's St, 210-270-7799, [druryhotels.com](http://druryhotels.com)) offers family-friendly accommodations (plus free breakfast, popcorn and happy-hour snacks) in a former Art Deco bank. A dip in its rooftop pool is the perfect end to a long day of play.

Where to play



The 343-acre Brackenridge Park houses the **San Antonio Zoo** ([sazoo-aq.org](http://sazoo-aq.org)), the gorgeous Japanese Tea Garden (check out its tons of cool koi ponds) and the kid-friendly Witte Museum, repository of South Texas history and culture.

Where to eat



Hop on one of San Antonio's street cars to historic Market Square, a marketplace that San Antonio residents have enjoyed since 1820, long before Texas was even a state. There, kids will love the tasty Mexican fare (try the enchiladas verdes), baked goods and colorful atmosphere (piñatas! mariachi bands!) at **Mi Tierra Cafe & Bakery** (218 Produce Row, 210-225-1262).

## Alamo-a-go-go

There's more to San Antonio than its famous fortress. By **Erin Osmon**

Before hitting the Lone Star State this summer, I made sure to do my homework—and *Pee-wee's Big Adventure* is just as entertaining now as when I was in grade school. Its sequence at San Antonio's historic Alamo, however—in which a desperate Pee-wee gets tricked into thinking his stolen bike is in the basement, a basement that doesn't actually exist—is a bummer supreme. Thankfully, the site of Texan independence is a far cry from the snooze-inducing history tour depicted in Tim Burton's 1985 film.

Sure, it's educational. Relics from the 1836 Battle of the Alamo, in which legendary Davy Crockett fought against the invading Mexican army, make it a veritable dream come true for grown-up history buffs. You know the type—the dad or uncle who mouths along to Ken Burns's *Civil War* by heart (and who likely dragged you to battlegrounds and memorials galore as a kid).

When I visited, plenty of these placard-combing parents struggled to schlep their uninterested junior counterparts from detail to detail. But there were also peppy junior explorers who navigated the mission's exhibit stations and air-conditioned movie theater with aplomb.

Thanks to a few online resources, your young'uns can do the same. Before visiting, download activities ([thealamo.org](http://thealamo.org)) for your kids to complete as you comb through the details. They'll have a blast scavenging the grounds to complete the site's History Hunt—it's

filled with puzzles, clues and tasks such as counting the number of fighters from each state by examining flags, and calculating the age of the giant oak tree in the center of the grounds.

Similarly, the gift shop's patch program tasks tenacious adventurers with a series of activities, broken up according to age group, then rewards them with a badge. Kids will also have a blast checking out the cannons scattered throughout the grounds, not to mention the rifles and guns on exhibit.

When they've had their fill of history, reward them with a trip to the the neighboring **River Walk** for a treat at

Justin's Ice Cream Company (245 E Commerce St, 210-222-2707). The shop boasts a multitude of housemade ice creams, gelatos and sorbets ranging from basic chocolate to exotic tamarind. Try the zabajone for a frozen twist on the traditional Italian dessert.

This puts you in prime position to finish the day about four blocks away

at the breathtaking Downtown All-Around Playground in HemisFair Park (200 S Alamo St, [hemisfair.org](http://hemisfair.org)), which hosted the 1968 World's Fair. You can relax while the little ones scale the huge wooden forts. Or head three blocks the other way, to the **San Antonio Children's Museum** (305 E Houston St, 210-212-4453, [sakids.org](http://sakids.org)) where the "Runway #9" exhibit allows pint-sized pilots the chance to fly a plane and run a control tower.

Don't forget to test Pee-wee's theory of a true Texas experience by singing "Deep in the Heart of Texas" as you mosey on back to your hotel. I can't guarantee that locals in cowboy hats will appear from thin air to clap along. But I can guarantee lots of giggles in the process.



**GET THERE** United and American airlines offer nonstop flights from O'Hare. Have 32 extra hours? Amtrak's "Texas Eagle" line goes directly to San Antonio from Union Station and even has family bedrooms. *Writer's stay/trip courtesy of San Antonio Convention & Visitors Bureau.*

## GET MORE!

WANT TO SEE OUR VACATION PHOTOS? [timeoutchicagokids.com/travel](http://timeoutchicagokids.com/travel)

Boats not your thing? Abel's Bike Shop (1119 Ada St, 210-542-6272, [abelsbicycleshop.com](http://abelsbicycleshop.com)) and Alamo Bike Shop (1016 N Flores St, 210-226-2453, [alamobikeshop.com](http://alamobikeshop.com)) deliver two-wheeled transit to your hotel. If your kids are tall enough, rent a cruiser from one of the many B-Cycle hubs ([sanantoniobicycle.com](http://sanantoniobicycle.com)) scattered throughout downtown—it's one of the first large-scale bike-sharing systems in the U.S.